



An Introduction to Elinor Glyn: Her Life and Legacy

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An Introduction to Elinor Glyn: Her Life and Legacy

Abstract: This special issue of Women: A Cultural Review re-evaluates an author who was once a household name, beloved by readers of romance, and whose films were distributed widely in Europe and the Americas. Elinor Glyn (1864–1943) was a British author of romantic fiction who went to Hollywood and became famous for her movies. She was a celebrity figure of the 1920s, and wrote constantly in Hearst's press. She wrote racy stories which were turned into films—most famously, Three Weeks (1924) and It (1927). These were viewed by the judiciary as scandalous, but by others—Hollywood and the Spanish Catholic Church—as acceptably conservative. Glyn has become a peripheral figure in histories of this period, marginalized in accounts of the youth-centred 'flapper era'. Decades on, the idea of the 'It Girl' continues to have great pertinence in the post-feminist discourses of the twenty-first century. The 1910s and 1920s saw the development of intermodal networks between print, sound and screen cultures. This introduction to Glyn's life and legacy reviews the cross-disciplinary debate sparked by renewed interest in Glyn by film scholars and literary and feminist historians, and offers a range of views of Glyn's cultural and historical significance and areas for future research.

Keywords: celebrity, magazines, publishing, film, 1920s, interdisciplinary, personal branding, archives, silent movies, talkies, cross-media cooperation

Elinor Glyn?

Today, Glyn is all but forgotten. The reasons why are familiar: her contemporary popularity, celebrity coming to a middle-aged woman and post-mortem ridicule. She did not win critical esteem, but gained a vast international readership. She was discontented at her British critics carping at her grammar and style, but in fact her ambitions lay in being taken seriously for her views on life and love. She sought to communicate these through the spotlight on her celebrity. In this she was successful, for in recent times she has been selected as one of a handful of ‘women of style’ across the ages, and inspired a fictional account of her life (Fowler 1996; Hacquoil 2014 see also Jones 1980).

Much of the existing scholarship on Elinor Glyn explores her role in defining the elements of sexual attractiveness and extending the vocabulary for articulating women’s sexual desire in magazines, novels and films. The two biographies of her by Anthony Glyn, her grandson, and Joan Hardwick moved the public eye away from Glyn as the mistress of a more important man, Lord Curzon, where his biographers and her immediate post-mortem assessment had placed her in the public consciousness, and focus on Elinor Glyn author and guide (Glyn 1955; Hardwick 1944). A third biographical work about her and her sister, the couturière Lady Duff Gordon, depicted the tensions between them (Etherington-Smith and Pilcher 1987). In her memoir *A Romantic Adventure*, Glyn claimed to be ‘a member of the band of pioneers in the cause of feminine emancipation who laboured so earnestly to free the souls and bodies of women from the heavy age-old trammels of custom and convention’ (Glyn 1936: 131). It was not an idle claim. In her day, her voice was on the radio as a spokeswoman on fashion and glamour, and in the lecture hall on women’s issues. She could be both controversial and reassuringly outspoken on the role of women in the parlour and the bedroom. Her most notorious novel, *Three Weeks* (1907), has a narrative centred on a love affair; its theatrical and movie adaptations were viewed by the judiciary in England and Boston as scandalously condoning extramarital sex. But other novels were viewed by Hollywood and the Spanish Catholic Church as positioning women in a socially acceptable gender role. Thus, Glyn’s life has been read in different ways, and this special issue reflects the range of approaches that scholars from different disciplines have brought to interpreting her life, legacy and significance.

One of the most well-known and earliest reassessments of Glyn was that of the film scholar Annette Kuhn, whose reflections on the progress of interest in Glyn are published here (see also Kuhn 2004, 2008). Following on

from Kuhn, feminist cultural studies authors Lori Landay, Priscilla Barlow, Laura Horak and Stacy Gillis have read Glyn within a feminist or women's studies critique (Landay 1998; Barlow 1999; Horak 2010; Gillis 2014). In this special issue, Stacy Gillis takes this further and carefully argues for the 'stickiness' of Glyn's writing in *Three Weeks*, drawing on Sara Ahmed's notion of sticky and circulating emotions, and revealing the significant cultural presence of Glyn's novel and tiger skin 'as shorthand for desire, overweening pleasure and female sexual agency' in the following decades. Cultural historian Nickianne Moody, on the other hand, has shed light on Glyn's portrayal of mature sexuality and extended her interpretation on this issue into her use of fashion as a vehicle to express her erotic modernity (Moody 2003). Anne Morey has written perceptively about Glyn's association with the Hollywood studios (Morey 2006), as has Hilary A. Hallett, who has also focused on Glyn's role in early Hollywood (Hallett 2013). Karen Randell and I have tracked her rise to popularity, applying the defining criteria for celebrity to Glyn, and in this special issue we explore her contemporary relevance through the intertextuality of her novel and movie *Six Days* (1923) with the later *Titanic* (1997) (Randell and Weedon 2015). Glyn's range across media is shown in Lisa Stead's forensic investigation of Glyn's role as a director, in which she explores the cultural and social meaning of the British voice in film within the context of the BBC's received pronunciation (Stead 2016). Stead goes back to Rachael Low's 1980s assessment of Glyn's 'rash' move into the British film industry, revising and developing it in her work on Glyn's two talkies, *Knowing Men* (1930) and *The Price of Things* (1930), which is part of her wider project on cinema-going and movie culture in interwar Britain. Finally, Vincent L. Barnett and I have assessed Glyn's extraordinary financial and personal negotiations with Ivan Thalberg and the film studios, and with Gerald Duckworth and other publishers and agents, arguing that a multidisciplinary approach is needed to get a holistic picture of Glyn's—and other early author-celebrities'—cultural and economic contribution (Barnett and Weedon 2014).

In this introduction to the special issue, I look at the benefits of an interdisciplinary approach in research on Glyn and, by extension, to the study of other writers who worked across media in this period. Pointing to areas where more research is possible, I identify the location of surviving films, some of which have been recently made available. I also ask whether the concept of personal branding should be applied to Elinor—or Madame—Glyn. I explore her role in advising women on love and relationships through melodrama and her magazine commentary on the hot topic of divorce, and I ask whether she was a conservative or a pioneer in these areas.

A Multidisciplinary Approach to Glyn

This special issue on Glyn collates articles from several disciplinary approaches. This is possibly because she stands out as a popular figure facing a confluence of historical forces for social and economic change: a new entrepreneurship in authorship, radical changes in women's roles and rights, innovative movie technologies and practices, emerging business models and personal branding. Our contributors explore her notions of class, inhibition and censorship, fashion and identity, sexuality and visual imagery. Glyn's popular writing was not shaped by the idealism of modernism or avant-garde literary movements. It did not hold itself apart; rather, it was shaped by the social and cultural forces of her time, and subject to the exigencies of the market. As an object of study, therefore, Glyn and her work draws the interest of feminists, cultural studies scholars, biographers, film historians and others. Without this multidisciplinary approach, her significance and importance would be reduced to observations of her shadow as it fell across the different paths of scholarship.

United under the broad interests of the humanities, each discipline has its own ontological approach and emphasizes its own selection of evidence, research method, analysis and contextual perspective. Book historians value empirical research and data-driven analysis at the micro scale; business and economic historians place greater store on comparative historical time series and economic trends. Film studies scholars' textual analyses of the movie within theoretical frameworks are distinct from film historians' research into studios, the star system and the development of film language. Cultural historians, women's history researchers, and fashion and art historians trace meaning through the detection of specific patterns in the kaleidoscope of biography and history. Without denying the validity of these epistemologies, it is important that we look for a more holistic assessment of the individual in these multiple contexts. To take three examples from this special issue: the microeconomics of publishing and international movie circulation; the recorded voice, class and Englishness; and how fashion and dress create meaning in Glyn's movies.

An example of how interdisciplinarity provides new avenues for research when studying the microeconomics of publishing and international movie circulation lies in Caterina Riba and Carme Sanmartí's article in this issue. They observe how Spanish publishers were unwilling to pass up the potential profits they expected from the British author from a lucrative translation deal. If we compare this to Barnett and Weedon's data on the microeconomics of Glyn's income, a story emerges of the value of translation rights boosted by the circulation of silent films; the translation of intertitles

for each country was all that was needed. The small royalty Glyn received on translations was a fairly standard amount for the time. Glyn's agent's account for Italian and Spanish translation rights shows that she brought in £72 in 1924, and in June that year Editora Internationale paid £16 18s 2d for the rights for *Three Weeks* (Weedon 2006). From 1922, there were book editions in Spanish by Ramón Sopena, while most were translated after 1926 by Editorial Juventud. Some 20 novels swiftly entered the Spanish market, with the translators and publishers guiding the novels through pre-publication censorship. Riba and Sanmartí show that Glyn's work became a mass phenomenon in Spain, and the books of the films had the greatest success, bringing with them considerable profit for the publishers. This stimulating article opens up possibilities for more work to be done on the effect of exhibition of the movie on sales of translations both of Glyn and of other international authors of the period.

The second example which illustrates a holistic approach to the study of Glyn is Lisa Stead's fascinating analysis of Glyn's voice in her talkies, in her Movietone address and on the radio. Starting with Glyn's surprising voice in her address at the beginning of her film *Knowing Men*, Stead explores the class-based, clipped received pronunciation that BBC radio effectively spread by avoiding regional accents. She argues that Glyn used the lightness and higher register of her voice in her attempt at classlessness and to promote Englishness within her films. Yet her voice was versatile. More romantically, in Hollywood she used her voice to hold her audiences in thrall. Samuel Goldwyn remembered meeting Glyn at a party at the home of Douglas Fairbanks Jr in 1922 and described the effect on the group:

She has the trick, so I found, of convincing you that her voice is some far-away, mysterious visitant of which she herself supplies only a humble and temporary instrument of escape ... it sounded like some lonely Buddha's prayer echoing down through the ages from the far heights of Tibet. (Goldwyn 1923: 238)¹

Stead's article links Glyn to the production of representations of Englishness between the wars, citing Alison Light's work on radio and cinema. Her article points to the importance of radio archives and the recorded voice, which are now more accessible through the BBC sound archives and YouTube for interdisciplinary research.

A third example comes from research which has been carried out on Glyn's role as a glamour icon and setter of fashion, drawn into this issue by Nickianne Moody. This was an important part of Glyn's persona as a film-maker and celebrity author, and it was partly due to her interest in

¹ My thanks to Karen Randell for this quote.

her elder sister's work. Both Glyn and her sister, the couturière Lucile (Lady Duff Gordon), had a taste for romance. Fashion historian Amy De La Haye commented that 'Lucile's choice of risqué garment names and designs ... were simultaneously seductive and empowering' (Mendes and De La Haye 2009: 33). She had a thriving business in London and a house in New York in 1909, and Chicago in 1911, and went on to design dresses for the Ziegfeld Follies on Broadway. It is not surprising, then, that Glyn employed her sister's dresses in her films. In *Knowing Men*, Glyn uses long shots to place and hold her heroine clad in Lucile's dresses in centre screen—an image reminiscent of a magazine double-page spread showing an interior and dress model. In Glyn's films, dress depicted mood and social status, and gave the character presence on-screen. As Moody points out, the modern straight-line fashion that her sister resisted appears in Glyn's movies; Glyn established specific sexual imagery associated with women's heterosexual sensuality, pleasure and desire through dress and accessories, and in particular her signature tiger skin. In a *Vogue* article about an exhibition 100 years after the sinking of the *Titanic*,² Sarah Mower acknowledged that the success of Lucile's business was unaffected by the scandal of the inquiry into the Duff Gordons' survival in the lifeboat (Mower 2012).

To these three examples I can add the exploration by Karen and myself of the special relationship between the United States and United Kingdom depicted in movies through the romance of transatlantic travel, written for a keynote and published in this special issue. Analysis of Glyn's work reveals the underlying issues of economic migration, marriage and class that are themes in Glyn's novel and film *Six Days* and the movie *Titanic* (Randell and Weedon 2017).

Glyn's Surviving Films: Dress and Tigers in His Hour

Many of Glyn's films no longer exist. Of those that have survived, some have been transferred to DVD, others are available on YouTube, and some remain in the archives. *It* (1927), with Clara Bow, is commercially available on DVD. *Beyond the Rocks* (1922) was discovered by Nederlands Filmmuseum and has been restored by archivists Mark-Paul Meyer and Giovanna Fossati, with laboratory work by Haghefilm Conservation, and is also available on DVD. *Such Men Are Dangerous* (1930) and *Három hét* (*Three Weeks*, 1917) have recently been put up on YouTube.³ A copy of the print of *The Romance of a Queen* (*Three Weeks*, 1924), with Russian intertitles, is in the Russian film archive; similarly, *His Hour* (1924) is at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Glyn's own two films, *Knowing Men* and *The Price of Things*, are in the British Film Institute, London.

2 Curated and researched by Joanna Hashagen.

3 We have commissioned a translation of the intertitles. Translated into English from the Hungarian by Orsolya Zsuppán, they are available at <http://crossmediaresearch.net/>

In *Három hét*, the film's retelling of Glyn's story focuses on the narrative incidents rather than atmosphere, using a boat to represent the 'casting adrift' from society and the royal chambers of a violent and drunken king. The sensual and seductive settings of the book become an escape in a yacht. The film emphasizes the east European setting of Glyn's novel through dress and its rich interiors. The film and its director would reward more study. István Nemeskürty gives us a brief glimpse of Márton Garas's (1885–1930) tantalizing history, so we know that he started as an actor, studied in Berlin under Illés at Litteraria and began his directing career with Jenő Janovics at Kolozsvár (Nemeskürty 1974). After 1917, he joined Hungária Studio and became managing producer, making over a score of films, including the surviving *Anna Karenina* (1918).

There has also been little discussion or analysis of Glyn's Russian novel, *His Hour*, in its film incarnation (Glyn 1910; MGM Vidor, 1924). It has been screened at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and yet it remains a rarity. It was a good money-spinner for Glyn, and popular. Watching it in the light of Moody's article on dress in Glyn's work, it is a good example of Glyn's use of costume to depict desire. The story is about the conquest of the English heroine Tamara (Aileen Pringle) by the Russian Prince Grichko (John Gilbert), a dashing philanderer who nevertheless falls in love, but who has a rival, Boris (Bertram Gransby). Set in the Khedive's Cairo, then Petrograd and the countryside en route to Riga, the storyline is one of an 'unwrapping of a mummy', as the intertitles describe it, or Tamara's journey from a cool and distant virginity to womanly allure. The imagery of captivity and cages with the accoutrements of whips and collars is not subtle: in Cairo, we are shown the ladies of the harem watching, through a grille, Grichko and Tamara dance at the ball. Caged, they have lost their eroticism for Grichko, who prefers to open the chase with a kiss on the neck, which is instantly rebuffed by Tamara. In a later scene at his palace in Petrograd, Grichko releases his two tigers from their cages for a bet; his house-party guests flee, climbing up walls and onto the balcony. Masterfully, he commands the tigers with his whip, getting them to circle the room and jump onto the table, before he leads them away.

This trope recurs in the dress of the two protagonists. Tamara wears a choker like a lead, and later a double-string necklace joined with a ring. At a dance, she is scratched on her breast by Grichko's uniform—he wears a military dolman ornately decorated with vertical frogging, which leaves on her a mark like tiger claws. Then there is the very visible eroticism of Grichko's sword and curved dagger thrust into the front of his waistband.

The symbolism is openly Freudian as dress, in *His Hour*, becomes the means of portraying subliminal desire. Tamara's clothes indicate her

gradual unfolding. As the story progresses, her dresses become more knowing and more womanly, the bodice slightly lower cut, sometimes more ornate, sometimes quite simple, relating to Tamara's feelings about Grichko. True to the romanticism of Lucile's wardrobe, in the final scene, Tamara is in a romantic flowing gown with a train and Grichko on his knees. She had captured him at the New Year's Eve party when she joined in the abandon of the Gypsy band's dance. Here, as the intertitles say, 'Cairo's mummy ... finally unfolded'.

In the *mise en scène*, furs indicate the change from the western dress in Egypt to the wilder, stormier hunting climate of Russia. In the crucial scene of the film, Tamara is locked in by Grichko while escaping from the storm into the hunting lodge. Caged, there is a stand-off between them when Tamara wrests the gun from Grichko's hand and points it at her own head. She finally faints (or sleeps), and Grichko carries her to the bed. He rips her bodice open to listen to her heart (Figure 1). The whole scene takes up 7 of the 50 minutes of the film.

Glyn's negotiation of the allure of power play hints at a darker side in her fiction. Her novels had the appeal of Edith M. Hull's, whose story of abduction and rape in the desert became the immensely popular film with Rudolph Valentino and Agnes Ayres, *The Sheik* (1922). Glyn, however, refined her notions of sexual attraction and, three years after *His Hour*, it was embodied on-screen in Clara Bow's memorable portrayal of the vivacious, confident and irresistible heroine of *It*. As a result, while Glyn's original conception of 'it' was not gendered, after Bow the 'It Girl' became a



Figure 1. Key scene in *His Hour* (1924) when Grichko rips Tamara's bodice to listen to her heart and check her breathing. Reproduced from <http://kittyinva.tumblr.com/search/His+Hour>, 22 May 2013 (accessed 26 February 2018).

feature of Hollywood legend, as bright new starlets with screen and celebrity presence were dubbed with the sobriquet.

Brand and Celebrity

To what extent can we see Elinor Glyn as a brand? Kuhn puts the term in quotes, saying it was bankable. Stead takes it as a given. Certainly equity could be found in the values, attributes and personality displayed under the signature in the newspapers and movie titles of Elinor Glyn. Her family recognized the worth of her name and, after 1924, her rights were managed by her company, which garnered a considerable income from selling her writings to agents and commissioning editors, magazines, studios and publishers. Yet while Glyn was helping Hollywood create stars and, as Morey says, attractive commodities in the actors she singled out (Morey 2006), the mechanisms of celebrity were in their infancy. Deborah Jermyn and Susan Holmes have traced such mechanisms back through the twentieth century to the nineteenth and earlier, identifying levels of meaning in and attributes of the celebrity (Jermyn and Holmes 2015). Glyn certainly had many of these: she constructed an authorial celebrity intentionally enmeshed with her own life; harnessed a heightened sense of history through her long popularity; drew her social status from a pseudo-aristocracy and her authority from a publicly known affair; and had an understanding of the cultural and economic processes of her own potential celebrity. She constructed her authorial persona as aging celebrity through her magazine articles and publicity portraits (Randell and Weedon 2015). So, Glyn's brand was exploited by her family through ownership of intellectual property, management of her income through her company, and the values and attributes of her public face. Yet Glyn's celebrity was more closely entwined with her personality, her construction of and control over her image, and her positioning of herself as the sage (mother) talking to the damsel, as in the title of her early volume of sayings (Glyn 1903).

Glyn's physical beauty played an important role in her life through her own relationships as well as her attitude to love and the role of men and women, and to her fictional characters. She also dealt with the opposite of beauty: deformity, disability, frustrated private aspirations for sexual happiness, and the social attractiveness she dubbed 'it' in *Man and Maid* (1918), which is about a disabled veteran falling in love, and her short story 'Saint or Satyr', about the beautification of the unattractive hero under the surgeon's knife, which was made into Glyn's first talkie, aptly called *The Mask of Love* (released as *Such Men Are Dangerous*). The film shows the effect of cosmetic surgery on the hero, who, transformed, regains the love of his life.

Such interests were located in her own self. Anthony Glyn, lunching with Glyn as a child, remembers her presence:

She had been lunching at the corner table of the Ritz hotels all over the world for the last forty years and was quite accustomed to being covertly stared at from behind menu cards. Even at seventy her great beauty, her erect carriage, her queenly presence, her imperious glance, her green eyes, red hair and magnolia-white skin would have attracted attention without her fame and reputation. (Glyn 1955: 13)

Her intimate knowledge of the decor and haute couture of the courts of Europe was part of the Glyn author persona which she cultivated and publicly projected. She had genuinely seen the courts of Russia, Spain, Britain and Egypt, and had circulated in high society in France and the United States. With such knowledge, Glyn was called on by radio presenters, magazine editors, chairs of women's associations and others to speak and entertain their audiences. She was asked to talk on etiquette and romance, on marriage and on beauty; her advocacy of sexual freedoms and discussions of marriage and divorce meant that she was a popular speaker. The press noted where she went, what she wore and what she was saying. Her opinions made the headlines: 'Age-Long Social System Very Hard on Women, Declares Elinor Glyn' in the 'paper for those who think', and she offered series of 'Lessons in Love' (Glyn 1921, 1925).

'Madame Elinor Glyn' does have some of the traits now associated with a brand personality: specific attributes and values which offer benefits to her customers and a sufficient authenticity in her constructed persona to develop a long-lasting relationship with her audience. Madame Glyn's values were expounded through her writing, acting, lecture tours and on-screen, and through her public image. She carefully framed her persona, commissioning photographic portraits which she sent to newspapers to accompany her articles or feature in journalists' interviews. Associated with these are her attributes: her characteristic signature, signifying authentication—a signature famously used in the film *It*—and her tiger skins, representing her belief in women's right to sexual fulfilment. Her values and attributes were authenticated in her home postcards, which show Glyn in her living room sitting on her sofa, surrounded by her skins and cats. It is a carefully staged interior, showing her as a glamour icon, setter of fashion and woman of passion (Christmas Postcard 1935–8). She also used her image to promote beauty products such as Lux soap. Photographs of her were everywhere—in the papers and on-screen—and she was even selected as one of a series of famous British authors on Wills cigarette cards. Such a use of her name and image as a brand might appear cynical.

However, it fitted with her celebrity persona, and it originated in her own tastes and values, for she enjoyed material things, confessing in her memoir that she ‘always loved such things as fine buildings, splendid rooms, rich silks and blazing jewels’, and she gained a substantial living by describing them (Glyn 1936: 339). Her words, often spoken to be quoted, show her consciousness of her own image.

Even if it is impossible to claim that Elinor Glyn was a brand as we recognize it today, we can see early marks of personal branding. Her company was called Elinor Glyn Ltd and, like her sister’s fashion label ‘Lucile Ltd, London, New York and Paris’, was a transatlantic success. But it was not clear to her contemporaries that hers was in any sense a ‘brand name’: Edward Knoblock, for example, mistook her assignment of the copyright of her co-authored script to her company for a slight, excluding or denying his co-authorship, and raised an injunction which affected the success of her film; similarly, Brandt and Kirkpatrick paid the woman not the company for a lucrative series of syndicated articles, much to the company secretary’s chagrin. Modern brands and branding were still in their infancy in the 1920s: James Walter Thompson Ltd, the advertising company, had begun the process with trademarks, but the mechanisms of celebrity and brand creation were unfamiliar. It was not until the 1930s that Napoleon Hill’s classic study of Andrew Carnegie, *Think and Grow Rich*, introduced the notion of personal branding (Hill 1937). Glyn, however, was in an ideal position to see the emergence of this trend. She published her own advice for women seeking to shape their own fortunes in the burgeoning international magazine market alongside advertisements for products we now recognize as early pioneers: Palmolive soap, Colgate toothpaste and Camel cigarettes (Hotchkiss and Franken 1923: 107–21). She also knew the self-help sector, having published as early as 1922 her advice for budding scenario and magazine writers in *The Elinor Glyn System of Writing*, and proposed practical measures for ambitious young women, including changing their voice, self-education through conversation, and reading and exercises for posture, presence and health. Glyn’s family was certainly aware of the economic potential which lay in her name.

Lover or Mother: Melodrama and Divorce

As Glyn says in her advice to would-be scenario writers:

All are swayed by the same feelings as they watch the film’s rapid picturization of the Moving Finger of Fate—as they even see things pictured that have happened in their own lives, or the lives of their friends. So

the movie screen is The World's Looking Glass, wherein it sees reflected all its own emotions. (Glyn 1922: 27)

She encouraged would-be authors to look to their own lives for the source of stories and dramas for the screen. In the same year as Alan Crosland's film of *Three Weeks* was released in the United Kingdom, Warner made a melodrama of Glyn's *How to Educate a Wife* (1924). The story is of a failing insurance salesman who asks his wife to help him. When she flirts too successfully with his clients, his jealousy knows no bounds. Glyn, who is credited with the scenario, made friends with Cecil B. DeMille on her arrival in Hollywood and became an extra in one of his films. Glyn's story fits with DeMille's *Don't Change Your Husband* (1919) and *Why Change Your Wife* (1920), which are movies about the breakdown of a relationship, followed by trials leading to personal growth, and ending with the couple being reunited. Glyn was interested in the question of marriage or divorce these films raised, and she came to be used as a sounding board for movie scripts on similar topics. In Glyn's archive at the University of Reading library, there are stories and scenarios submitted to her for review or consideration, though in many cases their provenance is unknown.

In these films, changing a husband or wife—or educating them—relates to the then controversial issue of divorce. In Glyn's own writings and advice books, the closeness of domestic living can lead to the erosion of love through minor daily acts of repulsion. Her guidance is often around how to avoid this and revive the romance in a relationship. In her book *Three Things*, she tackles the issue head-on. 'Should divorce be made easier?' she asks, commenting that:

The luxury of existence, the rapid movement from place to place permitted by motor-cars, the emancipation of women, the general supposed necessity of indulging in amusements, have so altered all notions of life and so excited and encouraged interest in sex relationships, that the old idea of stability and loyalty in marriage is shaken to its foundations. (Glyn 1915: 66)

Travel, entertainment and the possibility of independent living, which had been the prerogative of the upper classes, became more widely available to all. Perhaps most threateningly for the censors, in her fiction, the affair is not unpleasantly furtive or wretched; instead, it is liberating for both parties. Responding to the changes in society, her scriptwriters rewrote her movie heroines, replacing their aristocratic origins with the roles of the shop girl, secretary and flapper. Whether these more conservative

storylines appealed to the readers of her fiction and to what extent her readership and movie audience overlapped would be rewarding areas to explore.

Conservative or Feminist Pioneer?

As Kuhn's work has shown, the publication of *Three Weeks* caused a considerable scandal in Britain and the United States (Kuhn 2008). Riba and Sanmartí demonstrate rather strikingly in this special issue how inherently conservative her views on women's role within marriage were, conforming closely enough with the precepts of the Catholic Church to be acceptable for collections of books specifically targeted at female readers. As they say:

the fact that Rey and Morales [translator and author of forewords to her Spanish editions] interpreted Glyn as praising and even envying the Spanish model of femininity helped to win the favour of possible censors in light of the many objections that could have arisen to the British author's novels among the guardians of morality of the time.

Complementarism between genders was the dominant ideology in Spain, and Glyn's distinction between animal mothers and women lovers (who are her protagonists) was interpreted as an advocacy of women's role in the house and in the upbringing of children. Further evidence of this can be seen in the translation of titles: while her book titles were often literal translations, occasionally they reinflected Spanish Catholicism. For example, Glyn's book *The Man and the Moment*, when translated in 1927, became *La conquista de la esposa* (literally, 'The Conquest of the Wife'). Catalina Gheorghiu has argued that film retitling for Spanish viewers in different periods reflected a bias towards either *foreignizing* or *domestication* (Iliescu Gheorghiu 2016). Translations of titles could be 'literal', 'free' or 'adaptive', to convey meaning through equivalent social situations and linguistic devices or to reflect ideological precepts (for example, Catholic morality, patriotism). Applying this to Glyn's films, we can see that when *Love's Blindness* is translated as *Un error matrimonial* ('A Marriage Mistake') and *Beyond the Rocks* as *Amor triunfante* ('Triumphant Love'), the convention of marriage is reinscribed and the implication of going beyond safe moral boundaries is lost. Similarly, the love affair implied in *Six Days* is not evident in *En las ruinas de Reims* ('In the Ruins of Reims'), and the woman's role is gone from the translation of *The Great Moment* as *Caballero sin tacha* ('Knight Unblemished'). Portrayed in the press as somebody who wanted to be Latin but was constrained by English social mores, the domestication of her titles and exclusion of references to foreignness made her more acceptable in the repressive, censored Franco era. As Riba and Sanmartí argue,

however, in this later period, Glyn was considered suitable only for well-educated older readers.

Riba and Sanmartí's contribution raises the possibility of similar studies in other countries. Glyn sold the Dutch, Swedish and Italian translation rights to *Six Days*, as well as the Spanish. It would be fascinating to know more about how her stories and articles were published, exhibited and received within different national contexts.

This special issue of *Women: A Cultural Review* re-evaluates an author who was once a household name, beloved by readers of romance, and whose films were distributed widely in Europe and the Americas. In her day, she was parodied and banned as morally dangerous, while her work was judged as not worth copyright protection. She has gained the spotlight under feminism as an upholder of women's right to explore and articulate their own sexuality, though critics still debate her contribution as a pioneer. One thing is certain: scholars from very different disciplinary backgrounds have lighted on Elinor Glyn—author, film-maker and spokeswoman—as a person who encapsulates a particular moment in the role and representation of gender and sexuality in the arts and culture of the 1920s. It has been a pleasure to gain further insight into Glyn's cultural significance from this range of perspectives, and to present in this issue a selection of these voices.

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Orcid

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